

nesting now began, as indicated by the presence of the drake alone on the pond morning by morning and the absence from view of the duck, as she presumably occupied her nest on the island, concealed by the vegetation which had arisen upon its surface.

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### THREE INTERESTING GREAT HORNED OWLS FROM NEW ENGLAND.<sup>1</sup>

BY GLOVER M. ALLEN.

DURING the cold winter of 1917-18, New England had an unusual visitation of Great Horned Owls. A large number were killed or captured and many found their way into taxidermists' shops. Among several received that winter at the State Museum at Augusta, Maine, I noticed on a recent visit, a single one that appeared to be uncommonly dark, and on my expressing an interest in the bird, Curator Thomas A. James of the Museum very generously presented the specimen to the Boston Society of Natural History. It was an adult female taken at Scarborough, Maine, about February 7, 1918, and received in the flesh by Mr. James on the 9th. Through the kindness of Mr. Outram Bangs, it has been compared carefully with the series of Great Horned Owls from eastern North America in the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, and it seems to be without doubt referable to the dark northern race, typical in Labrador, *Bubo virginianus heterocnemis* Oberholser. It is especially interesting, however, in being even darker than the generality of these northern birds, with a considerable clouding of blackish in addition to the black barrings that thickly cover the breast, and in almost lacking the usual bright buffy markings. Its whole appearance is therefore unusually sooty. It agrees with the Newfoundland and Labrador birds in having the facial disks dark, a mixture of black, gray and tawny, instead of nearly clear tawny, as in typical *virginianus*. The feet are dusky gray, finely speckled with darker, instead of the usual

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the Nuttall Ornithological Club, January, 1919.

ochraceous color, though in this respect it is nearly matched by a bird from Newfoundland.

In 1897, Mr. Arthur H. Norton (Proc. Portland Soc. Nat. Hist., Vol. 2, p. 103) recorded as a bird new to the Maine list, a very dark-faced Horned Owl in the collection of the Portland Society of Natural History, that was killed many years previously and given the Society in March, 1870. It was taken near Portland, Maine. Mr. Norton referred it to the race *saturatus* as then understood (now restricted to the dark form of British Columbia), and described it as "very dark brown, or blackish brown" above with fine grayish marks; "very wide dusky bars below, having a tendency to mass on the breast; feet and bases of the feathers below deep tawny (much deeper than in any specimen of *virginianus* examined)"; wing 400 mm.; tarsus with numerous dusky bars. No doubt this, too, is an example of the subspecies *heterocnemis* and came from the north.

Later, Knight (in his 'Birds of Maine,' 1908, p. 260-261) dismissed this record with the remark that Mr. Norton's specimen is "not much darker in coloration than many individuals seen elsewhere. It is indeed possible that all our Maine birds are nearer the northern form and may be better regarded as all being referable to it." This is hardly the case, however, as the birds I have seen from southern and eastern Maine, taken in the breeding season, are clearly typical *virginianus* and agree with Massachusetts specimens in their clear rufous facial disks and lighter coloration.

A second Great Horned Owl of the 1917-18 flight was a very pallid female bird killed at the Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Mass., by one of the employees of the cemetery, on December 4, 1917. It was brought to the M. A. Frazar Company's taxidermist establishment and I saw the bird in the flesh shortly after. Through Mr. Frazar's interest the bird was obtained for the Boston Society of Natural History. During the past winter, 1918-19, there has again been a considerable flight of Great Horned Owls. Mr. Frazar says that over twenty had been received at his shop before January 1, 1919, where in ordinary years scarcely half a dozen come in, during an equal period. Among the birds of this year's flight was another pale individual which has also been secured by the Boston Society of Natural History.

According to the person who obtained it, it was picked up dead in Somerville, Mass., on November 26, 1918, and its death was supposed to be due to its having flown against a house, or some other obstruction, a somewhat unusual fate for an Owl. Both these birds are very similar and should evidently be referred to the same subspecies. The Mt. Auburn bird has pure whitish facial disks, and feet immaculate above, though lightly speckled with darker at the sides. The Somerville bird, a male, has the whitish facial disks somewhat washed with pale ochraceous, but the feet are pure white. A comparison of these two specimens with the pallid western birds seems to indicate that of the two large races of the interior of North America, they are best referred to the northern, *Bubo virginianus wapacuthu* (Gmelin), the Arctic Horned Owl. They are not quite so dark above as the bird of the interior United States, Dakota to Nevada (*B. v. occidentalis*) and are slightly paler in the facial area. In measurements they are of maximum size, the female with a wing of 390 mm., the male 375 mm., hence are not to be referred to the other pallid western races which are smaller. The supposed breeding range of this subspecies is north-central Canada, from Hudson Bay to Slave River, migrating occasionally south in winter to the northern United States. There is one previous record for this race in Massachusetts, namely a bird killed at Waltham, November 30, 1867, by C. J. Maynard. This specimen was formerly in the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, but has lately been given to the Boston Society of Natural History, so that the latter institution now has all three of these Massachusetts birds. All seem remarkably similar and no doubt represent this Arctic race. In his 'Birds of the Cambridge Region' (1906, p. 204) Mr. William Brewster considers at length the status and correct name for this specimen and considers that Hoy's name *subarcticus* is more certainly applicable than the barbaric *wapacuthu*. In the paper previously cited, Norton records a bird probably of the same form under the name *B. v. arcticus*. It was presented to the Portland Society alive on December 6, 1869, and was said to be from Maine, though the exact locality was not then specified. Its color above "is pale, hoary gray: top of head much as in *virginianus*: below, white with numerous narrow, dusky bars on the feathers: feet, white, nearly

immaculate; . . . wing about 380 mm." The color of the facial disks is not mentioned. Knight in his 'Birds of Maine,' prefers to treat such birds as "extremely pale or faded individuals of the typical Horned Owl," considering the species non-migratory. This course, however, seems hardly justifiable, and to my mind the present additional records of birds identical respectively with the Labrador and the northwest Canadian forms seem sufficient proof that they have come as occasional migrants from these precarious portions of the species' range, driven from their usual year-round haunts by some causes which we have not yet wholly fathomed: but no doubt chiefly through failure of the food supply in their home regions. These constitute the first definite record for Massachusetts of the Labrador Horned Owl, and the second and third records for the Arctic Horned Owl in the same state.

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## VARIATION IN THE GALAPAGOS ALBATROSS.

BY LEVERETT MILLS LOOMIS.

### *Plates XIV-XVI.*<sup>1</sup>

FOR an albatross, the Galapagos Albatross (*Diomedea irrorata*) has a peculiar distribution. It breeds in the Southern Hemisphere within less than two degrees of the equator and, so far as known, only on Hood Island of the Galapagos Archipelago. After reproduction it apparently migrates southward, as far at least as the coast of Peru.

The island isolation of this bird during its breeding season and its large size render it an attractive subject for a study of variation. The most striking differences occur in the coloration of the downy young and in the form of the bill in sexually mature individuals taken at their rookery.

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<sup>1</sup> I am under obligations to Mr. Charles B. Barrett and Mr. L. R. Reynolds for the photographs reproduced in these plates. Mr. Reynolds photographed the downy young and the bills showing side aspect and Mr. Barrett enlarged the latter to natural size and photographed the other bills.